

DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



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CONTENTS

Zoltán CZAJLIK	7
<hr/>	
<i>René Goguey (1921 – 2015). Pionnier de l'archéologie aérienne en France et en Hongrie</i>	
ARTICLES	
Péter MALI	9
<hr/>	
<i>Tumulus Period settlement of Hosszúhetény-Ormánd</i>	
Gábor ILON	27
<hr/>	
<i>Cemetery of the late Tumulus – early Urnfield period at Balatonfűzfő, Hungary</i>	
Zoltán CZAJLIK – Balázs HOLL	59
<hr/>	
<i>Zur topographische Forschung der Hügelgräberfelder in Ungarn</i>	
Zsolt MRÁV – István A. VIDA – József Géza KISS	71
<hr/>	
<i>Constitution for the auxiliary units of an uncertain province issued 2 July (?) 133 on a new military diploma</i>	
Lajos JUHÁSZ	77
<hr/>	
<i>Bronze head with Suebian nodus from Aquincum</i>	
Kata DÉVAI	83
<hr/>	
<i>The secondary glass workshop in the civil town of Brigetio</i>	
Bence SIMON	105
<hr/>	
<i>Roman settlement pattern and LCP modelling in ancient North-Eastern Pannonia (Hungary)</i>	
Bence VÁGVÖLGYI	127
<hr/>	
<i>Quantitative and GIS-based archaeological analysis of the Late Roman rural settlement of Ács-Kovács-rétek</i>	
Lőrinc TIMÁR	191
<hr/>	
<i>Barbarico more testudinata. The Roman image of Barbarian houses</i>	

FIELD REPORTS

Zsolt MESTER – Norbert FARAGÓ – Attila KIRÁLY 203

Report on the excavation at Páli-Dombok in 2015

Ágnes KIRÁLY – Krisztián TÓTH 213

Preliminary Report on the Middle Neolithic Well from Sajószentpéter (North-Eastern Hungary)

András FÜZESI – Dávid BARTUS – Kristóf FÜLÖP – Lajos JUHÁSZ – László RUPNIK –
Zsuzsanna SIKLÓSI – Gábor V. SZABÓ – Márton SZILÁGYI – Gábor VÁCZI 223

Preliminary report on the field surveys and excavations in the vicinity of Berettyóújfalu

Márton SZILÁGYI 241

Test excavations in the vicinity of Cserkeszőlő (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, Hungary)

Dávid BARTUS – László BORHY – Emese SZÁMADÓ 245

Short report on the excavations in Brigetio in 2015

Dóra HEGYI 263

Short report on the excavations in the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely in 2015

Maxim MORDOVIN 269

New results of the excavations at the Saint James' Pauline friary and at the Castle Čabrad'

THESIS ABSTRACTS

Krisztina HOPPÁL 285

*Contextualizing the comparative perceptions of Rome and China through
written sources and archaeological data*

Lajos JUHÁSZ 303

*The iconography of the Roman province personifications and their role in the imperial
propaganda*

László RUPNIK 309

Roman Age iron tools from Pannonia

Szabolcs ROSTA 317

History of the settlement of the Sand Ridges of Kiskunság between the 13th–16th century

Short report on the excavations in the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely in 2015

DÓRA HEGYI

*Institute of Archaeological Sciences
Eötvös Loránd University
hegyidora12@gmail.com*

Abstract

In 2015, the Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology participated in the excavations in the Castle of Újhely. During the six weeks of the fieldwork we focused to the yet unexplored northwestern part of the Castle Hill. The main purpose of the research were defining the line of encircling wall of the castle around the courtyard and the possible building which were connected to the wall.

The planned archaeological research of the Castle of Újhely began in 2007 on the initiative of the Municipality of Sátoraljaújhely under the professional direction of the Rákóczi Múzeum of the Hungarian National Museum. The excavations were led by István Ringer. The written sources mentioned the castle as *castrum Patak* which was built after the Mongol invasion and destroyed at the turn of the 1530's and 1540's. Between 2007 and 2014 the excavations concentrated to the southeastern part of the Castle Hill where remains of a building complex, the six meters wide tank of the castle were found during the excavations. The significant detail of the dry moat cut into the rock, which divided the castle into two parts, was also come to light in these years (*Fig. 1*).

In 2015 the Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University joined the excavation and we focused to the yet unexplored northwestern part of the Castle Hill.¹ Five trenches and a smaller probe were opened. The main purpose of the research were defining the line of encircling wall of the castle around the courtyard and the possible building which were connected to the wall. We marked these trenches on the edges of the plateau of the Castle Hill and on the northwestern top of it (*Fig. 2*).

In Trench 1 and 2 we managed to excavate a part of the highly eroded castle wall. In Trench 2 a surprisingly thick, three meters wide wall connected to the castle wall was found, which ran into the interior of the courtyard and after 5.5 meters turned east in L shape. Another part of this wall was excavated in Trench 4 next to Trench 2. On the crown of this wall section the

1 Participants were: Bogáta Jáký-Bárdi (PhD student, Eötvös Loránd University), Árpád Balogh, Péter Bartha, Zsófia Básti, Luca Búr, András Fazekas, Mónika Gácsi, Olivér Gillich, Fruzsina Hege, Bence Jörös, Sára Lantos, Eszter Magyar, Borbála Maros, Máté Mészáros, Zsófia Nádai, Fruzsina Németh, Veronika Németh, Maja Oszolik, Zsolt Papp, Teodóra Polyák, Orsolya Popovics, Rita Rakonczay, Csaba Sághegyi, Borbála Schliszka, Ágnes Szabados, Katalin Szarvas, Gergely Szoboszlay, József Vigh (students at the Eötvös Loránd University), Kitty Soltészová (Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra) and László Homonna (metal detectorist).

remains of an opening built from bricks was found which was slightly sloping and widening to the south. On the southern side of the wall we found whole bricks in the wide layer of ruins above the medieval, mortar covered floor. These would belonged to the vaulted structure of the opening with a temporarily questionable function (*Fig. 3*).

Now the function of these buildings connecting with the castle wall described above is also a question. We can only guess before the clarification of the whole ground plan, that the remains of a tower or a palace were excavated. The thickness of the wall may suggest that it could be a multi-storied building. To the facade of the building was connected a slanting, slightly curved wall in the courtyard, which further part was pulled down in Probe 1 opened in the middle of the courtyard to observe this wall.

One of the most impressive results of the archaeological excavations in the castle was found in Trench 3, which was opened on the northwestern tip of the plateau. Here in the middle of the excavated north-south wall was an *in situ*, arched doorframe decorated with chamfer. The doorframe made by rhyolitic tuff remained in good conditions with the doorstep stone and the iron ring on the left side of the frame belonged to the lock. On the inner side of the frame the imprint of the former wooden door was clearly visible. From inside the door was originally locked with a large beam. The places of the beam were preserved on both sides of the door. A stone mason's mark was also observed on one of the curved elements of the frame. We definitely found the entrance of the tower which closed the northwestern end of Castle Hill with, on the average, three meters high walls. Inside the tower the floor was made of hard-packed clay floor. In front of the door we documented the mortar covered rock surface as elsewhere in the courtyard. The clarification of the ground plan of the supposedly triangle-shaped tower will be the task of next year's excavation (*Fig. 4–5*).

During the cleaning of the interior of the tower we found apart from the denier of Luise II from 1522, a hoard of 20 silver coins. They stucked to each other, but after the restoration it could be determined that they are denars of Ferdinand I between 1528 and 1532 (*Fig. 6*). The thick layer of ruins in and around the tower consisted of rich materials, mostly pottery fragments, beyond the coins. During the restoration of the fragments, which is still in progress, mainly cooking pots were compiled but pieces of jugs using for liquid storage were also found among the pottery fragments. Noteworthy is a cup compiled from tiny pieces. The excavated fragments from the tower are from the 16th century and relate to the chronological horizon appointed by the above mentioned coins. This period coincides the time of the castle's destruction known from written sources (*Fig. 7–8*).

On the basis of the archaeological excavations planned for several decades we can say – although Castle of Újhely almost disappeared of the face of the earth – that significant remains of the castle have been preserved under the thick layers of ruins. We trust to continue the excavation of the castle in the following years together with the conservation, moderate compliment and restoration of the discovered walls.



Fig. 1. The territory of the Castle Hill in 2015 (Photo: Civertan).

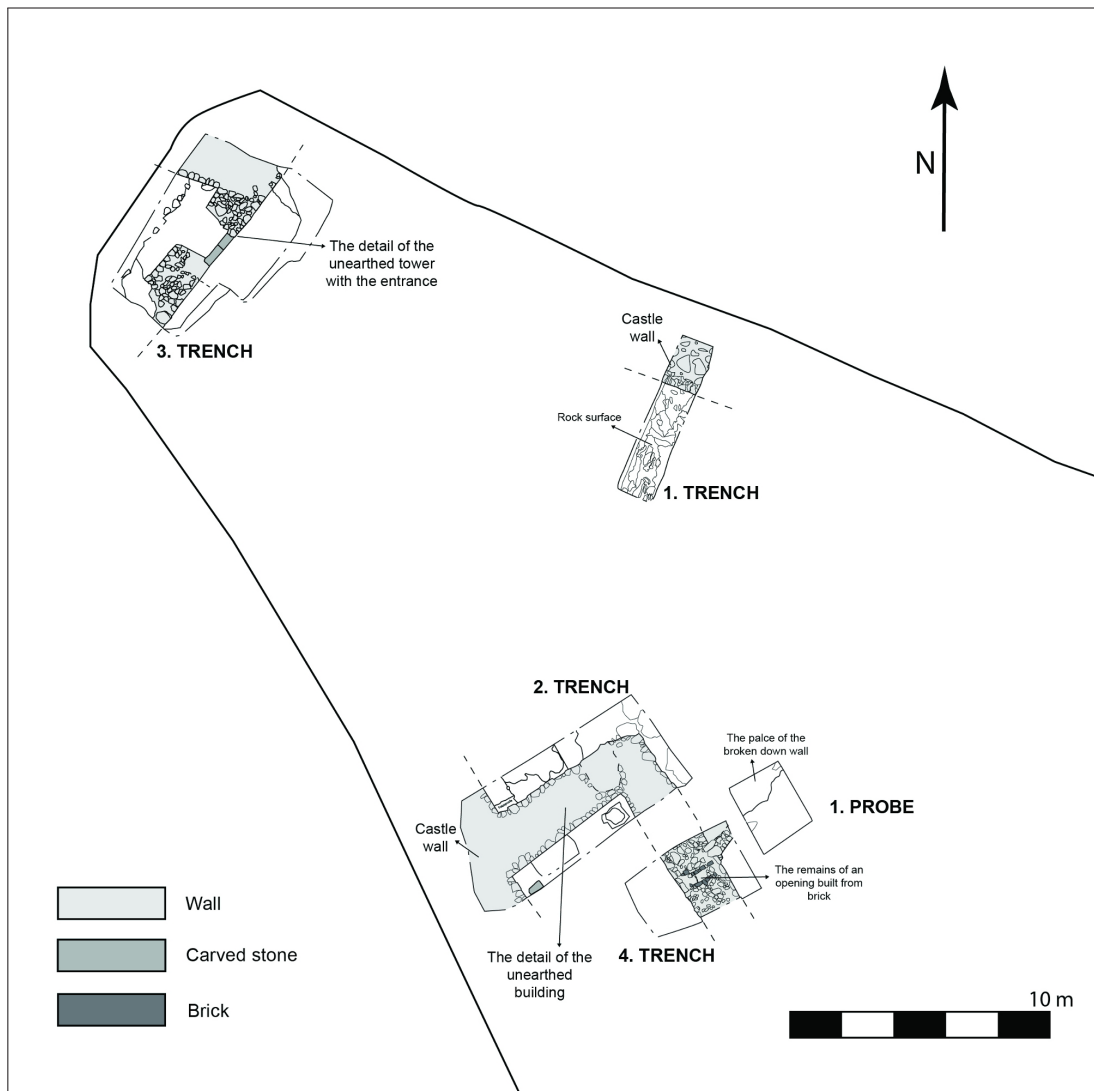


Fig. 2. The groundplan of the excavation trenches in 2015 (Dóra Hegyi, Szabolcs Honti, Zoltán Nagy).



Fig. 3. The remains of the tower connecting to the inner side of the castle wall (Photo: Dóra Hegyi).



Fig. 4. The entrance door of the northwestern tower during the excavation (Photo: Dóra Hegyi).

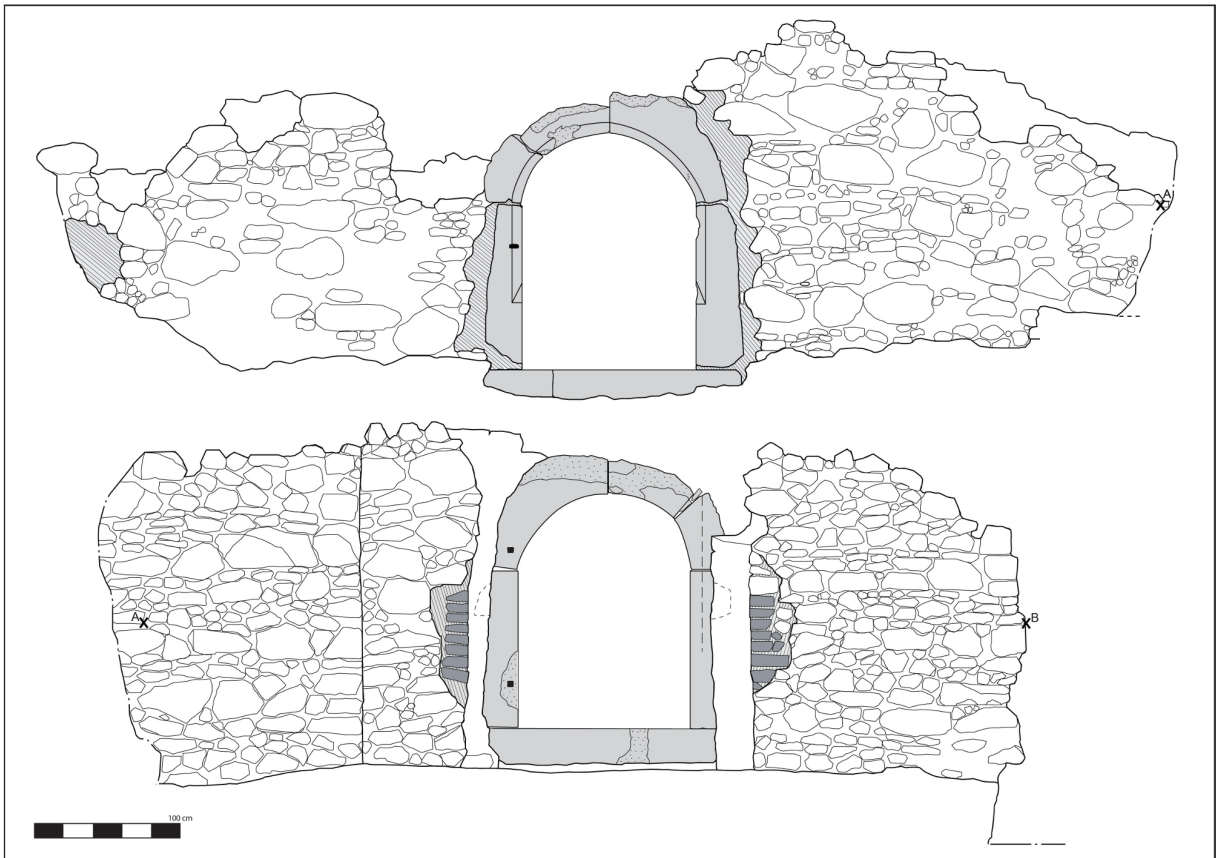


Fig. 5. The drawings of excavated walls of the northwestern tower (Dóra Hegyi, Gergely Szoboszlai).



Fig. 6. Denar of Ferdinand I, 1528 (Photo: László Váradi).



Fig. 7. 15–16th century pots from the excavation (Photo: László Váradi).



Fig. 8. A cup found inside the northwestern tower, 16th century (Photo: László Váradi).